Mushtaq Soofi

A Review on Raj Kahani

‘Raj Kahani’ is a book of tales published by Sanjh Publications, Lahore, dealing with historical or semi-historical characters of the sub-continent. The tales told by folk-story tellers have a magical touch about them. Professor Saeed Bhutta, a known scholar who painstakingly collected the stories, has a visceral feel for the Punjab’s folklore which gives us people’s view of history ignored by chroniclers and court historians. We come across characters with Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim origins displaying a stunning diversity which has been a hallmark of our culture. The story tellers rising above the local or parochial vision give universal dimension to what they have to tell. And what they tell is nothing less than a delicately constructed artistic narrative describing the complex interplay of social and cultural forces shaping the sub continental society. The way Mian Kamal Din builds his stories is simply breath taking. He with his unparalleled mastery over the language and history creates such a dramatic ambiance that when he speaks, the noisy birds fall silent. Six stories Ram Chandar, Raja Karnal, Raja Birball, Mullah dopiaza, Sa’adullah Khan Chinoti and Bhor Sultan are by Mian Kamak Din. Taan Sen and Radha Bhattiani are by Nazar Mirasi and Ghulan Rasool Mirasi respectively. The book is a source of joy and pride for anybody interested in our culture and history. The carefully prepared glossary can help understand the nuances of the language. Saeed Bhutta deserves to be lauded for documenting a hitherto ignored chunk of our social and cultural history.